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Leroy Garrett, Editor

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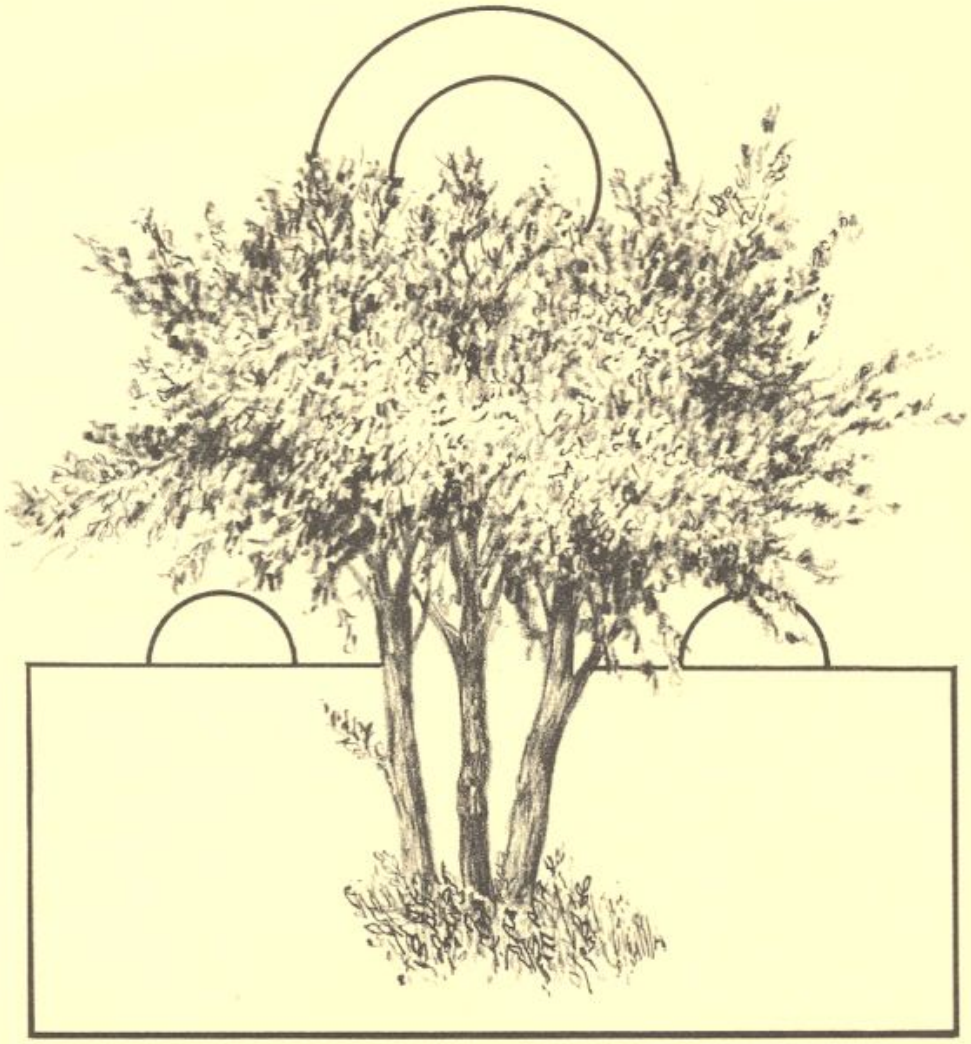

Thine is the day. Thine is the night; Thou hast prepared the light and the sun. Thou hast established all the boundaries of the earth. Thou hast made summer and winter. – *Psalm 74:16, 17*

Volume 17, No. 10 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **December 1975**

The Word Abused . . .

"WALKING IN THE LIGHT"

"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 Jn. 1:7).

This passage is given a very strange twist indeed, all for the purpose of teaching the idea that fellowship is predicated upon doctrinal inerrancy. If one holds a doctrinal error, then he cannot be "fellowshipped," for he is *not walking in the light*, which is the basis of fellowship according to this passage. This verse has thus become part of "the party line" in most every sect among us, and it is used to justify the alienating and dividing of God's people. To "walk in the light" is made to mean doctrinal purity, especially in reference to the unique interpretations of the particular party.

If one has what is believed to be a wrong view of prophecy, such as premillennialism, then he is not "walking in the light" and so must be excluded from fellowship. If he supports *Herald of Truth* or a missionary society, then he walks in darkness rather than light and therefore must be rejected as a faithful brother. If one truly "walks in the light" then he will be *right* on everything from the way to make music in the assembly and the Sunday School to the use of literature and the method of serving the Supper. *Light* is thus made to mean "truth," which is made to refer to all the teaching of the scriptures, including (mainly) the disposition made of the *silence* of the scriptures.

The passage therefore might be paraphrased this way, once the bending and twisting is accomplished: *We can have fellowship with each other if we believe and practice all the teaching of the New Testament alike.* This becomes even more oppressive when the silence of the scriptures is imposed within this framework. We are told that we must agree on what the Bible says nothing about to start with, whether classes, organs, agencies, colleges. We must see alike what it doesn't say as well as what it does say! Otherwise we are not *walking in the light!*

On the very face of it this is an impossible interpretation, and it will do nothing but contribute to the multiplication of sects. A man would have to "withdraw" from his own wife and family, and even from himself, for none of us is completely right all the time. Such an irresponsible interpretation leaves no place for forbearance, and it implies what never has been and never will be: that people can see all the scriptures eye to eye.

In their more sober moments the advocates of this interpretation realize the impossibility of complete conformity, and so they allow for some deviation, *except on those matters peculiar to that particular group.* They might differ on social issues, participation in war, or whether one can be a Mason —or even upon an ordinary portion of scripture —but *never* on what comes under the category of "the issues." The issues of

course differ from party to party. And so, for the most part, "walking in the light" is made to mean being right on the issues. One might be wrong about some things, even in his moral life, and still be "walking in the light" if he is right about instrumental music and the non-denominational character of the Church of Christ. Our singing brother, Pat Boone, is an illustration of this. Even when his personal life was less than exemplary (according to his own testimony), he was still accepted. It was when he started speaking in tongues that he ceased "walking in the light." Sipping nocturnal cocktails with Hollywood's worldlings does not inveigh upon "doctrinal purity" as does glossolalia.

Oddly enough, this verse in 1 John is seldom used in reference to those practices clearly condemned in scripture, such as greed, reviling, jealousy, pride, lying, covetousness, passion, evil desire, quarreling, malice, envy, hatred, adultery, treachery, slander, ingratitude, conceit. If "darkness" was equated with such as these sins, instead of whether one has a piano in his church or contributes to Herald of Truth, then we would have no problem. If one contends that a brother full of hate and malice, or greed or jealousy, is not "walking in the light, as he is in the light," he can hardly be accused of abusing the word. But how about the man who treacherously undermines his brother, reviling and slandering him, for being a "liberal," charging that he is not "walking in the light" because he will not say that instrumental music is a sin?

I have recently read a lengthy account of one of these "kangaroo court" proceedings against one of our brothers at a Christian college. The man's long years of sacrificial devotion to the college and education meant nothing in the face of the malicious slander hurled against him. All the dirty work was done to his back, so that he was already prepared for the sacrifice by the time he was allowed to defend himself. His sin was some deviation from Church of Christ doctrine, a *liberal* they called him. Theirs was treachery, passion, malice, and slander, and this on the part of leading administrators and biblical scholars. But it was he, not they, we are suppose to believe, who was walking in darkness rather than light and therefore unfit for fellowship. It is another illustration of how abuse of the word nearly always goes with abuse of the brethren.

The aged apostle John, spending his last years at Ephesus where he wrote this little letter, knew something of the difficulty of being a Christian. He was acquainted with the fierce attacks made against the faith. He saw firsthand how many grew discouraged and gave up the faith. So his little epistle is filled with assurances and encouragement. The world may pass away, but he who does the will of God abides forever (2:17). Even when the deceiver is at work there is that anointing that remains in the believer (2:27). He who has hope lives the pure life (3:3). The believer can know that God abides in him by the Spirit that is given him (3:24), and he can know that he has passed out of death into life because he loves his brothers (3:14). On and on it goes, assuring and reassuring.

One can see why the letter was a favorite of Polycarp, who was one of the first of the apostolic fathers to make reference to it in his writings. It was such assurance and hope that he learned from old John that led the aged Polycarp to suffer martyrdom without flinching. The proconsul tried to save him because of his age. “Swear by the genius of Caesar,” he was urged. The old bishop was not about to be among those that John described as “They went out from us, but they were not of us.” He rather waved to the mob that was crying for his blood, and he refused to be bound to the stake where he was to be burned, confident that the Lord would give him the strength to remain in his place and bear the pain. Many testified that they heard a heavenly voice speak to him, “Be strong, Polycarp, and play the man.” The proconsul did all in his power to get him to curse Christ so that he could yet spare him. “Eighty and six years have I served him, and he hath done me no wrong; how then can I blaspheme my king who saved me?” That’s how he died, inspired by the likes of *1 John.*

John and Polycarp would surely be aghast to see how this little letter is used to separate brother from brother, and to *discourage* rather than encourage. To John and Polycarp “walking in the light” involved the very essence of discipleship. It has to do with the faith that one can die for as well as live by. To walk in the light is to walk with God, to commune with Him and to be lost in His love. Light gives direction, and he who walks in darkness “does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.” (2:11). Polycarp knew where he was going, for he walked in the light, as did the old apostle, who later wrote from his exile on Patmos: “After this I looked, and lo, in heaven an open door!”

We must not turn from such a heritage as this and make “light” refer to being right on the class question and “darkness” mean sending a missionary through a society rather than by direct support. These are crucial words to John, touching the heart of the Christian faith, and we do harm to ourselves and disservice to the scriptures when we use them to promote sectarianism.

In his gospel record John assures us that the eternal Word is “the light of men,” and that light keeps on shining in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it. He further says that the Word is the true light and that he enlightens every man coming into the world (1:4-9). In 8:12 he shows how Jesus said: “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” He puts light and darkness together again in 12:35: “Jesus said to them, ‘The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes.’” Again in 12:46: “I have come aslight into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.”

He makes "walking" mean *abiding* or *living in.* One abides or walks in light or he abides or walks in darkness. The eternal Word made flesh, Jesus the Christ, is that light. To "walk in the light" is to be in him or to live in him. To "walk in darkness" is to exist apart from him, to belong to the world instead of to God.

Paul says it all in 2 Cor. 4:6: "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." The apostle saw in the creation narrative of Gen. 1 a declaration that God's ultimate light is manifest in the appearance Jesus. He is that shaft of light that pierces the deepest darkness of all the ages, reflecting the knowledge of the glory of God. The darkness remains, but it cannot cope with the light. If we choose the light, the darkness cannot be victorious over us.

I conclude, therefore, that "walking in the light" means to be in communion with God by being "at home" in Jesus. Jesus *is* the light in that he is the Christ; he is *in* the light in that he reflects God's glory. And so 1 Jo. 1:7 could read: "If we are in communion with God even as Jesus is in communion with God, then we all share the common faith that is in Christ, and the blood of Jesus keeps on cleansing us of all sin, making us continually pure in his sight."

Or we could simply say that "walking the light" means to be like Jesus, for he is the light. It means to be Christ-like. We are to be like him just as he is like God. Darkness refers to separation from God, even enmity toward Him.

We are of course dealing with an infinite concept that defies exact definition. *Light* can well represent the whole of the Christian faith, while *darkness* stands for anything that militates against that faith. But we must always speak of fundamentals and not peripheral issues. If a man is filled with greed and malice, he is certainly threatened by the power of darkness.

He is hardly walking in light. But we cannot draw such a conclusion if the man is a social drinker, for this is a peripheral issue. Even if the moderate drinker behaves inexpediently, he cannot necessarily be associated with darkness because of it. He may still reflect the glory of God in his life because of his Christ-likeness. But not if he is treacherous or reviling or adulterous.

"Walking in the light" has to do, then, with intimacy with God. We are "at home" with Him because of Jesus. I t means to be like God by being like Jesus. "Walking in darkness" means to live in opposition to all that is good and holy. It means to be unlike God, separated from Him, and perhaps even to be his enemy. Darkness is sin.

To equate light with truth and truth with knowledge, and thus give this passage the twist that makes "walking in the light" refer to intellectual knowledge or doctrinal purity is to be guilty of the very heresy John is dealing with. "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1) is an appropriate reference here. One's head can be full of "knowledge,"

while his heart is empty of Jesus. *Light* has reference to a Person —knowing him —rather than to a system of doctrine. Doctrine is part of it only insofar as it is the *basic* teaching of the scriptures rather than our own theological deductions.

The interpretation that I have given "walking in the light" —that it refers to being Christ-like or in intimate, communal relation to God —has its implications, all of which the apostle levels against the Gnostics, who held that to the "enlightened" believer all conduct is morally indifferent. These are:

1. If one walks in the light, he will preserve the unity that exists between brethren and will not be divisive, as were the Gnostics (1:5-7).

2. If one walks in the light, he will confess that he is a sinner and unable to live morally independent of God, which the Gnostics proudly claimed, which to John made them liars (1:8-10).

3. If one walks in the light, he will obey the commandments of Jesus. "He who says 'I know him' but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (2:4). The Gnostics laid claim to lots of insight, but they ignored that teaching that is designed to make one Christ-like.

4. If one walks in the light, he will love his brothers. "He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness still. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and in it there is no cause for stumbling" (2:9-10). The Gnostics loved their party more than the Body of Christ, and it is unfortunate that this aspect of Gnosticism lives on to afflict the church.

The sum and substance of religion is fellowship with God. John wrote this letter so that his readers could grasp this great truth, thus making their joy complete (1:4). We are today, for the most part, a joyless people, and this is because religion is to us something apart from communion with God as Father. This is evident enough when this great scriptural concept, "Walking in the light," is generally understood to refer to those doctrines, which are really the doctrines of men, designed to safeguard party loyalty. We are thus asked to trade our birthright of life and light for a mess of sectarian pottage.

This passage should make it clear that men have no control over who is or who is not in the fellowship. All who are in communion with God are in the fellowship. This is the ground of fellowship. There never was any other and never will be any other. Men look toward darkness rather than light when they attempt to base fellowship on their own insipid deductions and speculations. —*the Editor*

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The Word Abused . . .

"CHURCH OF CHRIST CHURCH"

Billie Sol Estes got back into big time news media once more. On the "Update" page of a recent *Newsweek* there is an account of Billie Sol's life in Abilene since his parole four years ago. Among other things it says, "He attends services at one of Abilene's twelve Church of Christ churches."

A reporter can be excused for using language that is a bit unorthodox in our own ranks. After all, in Abilene there are Methodist churches, Presbyterian churches, Church of God churches, and Church of Christ churches. The syntax is sound and it fits the facts of the case. But most of us are reluctant to say Church of Christ *church* since that so obviously makes *Church of Christ* a denominational title.

In moments of unguarded candor it does, however, appear. There was the widow who wrote in the *Firm Foundation* some years ago that she would like "to correspond with a Christian widower or bachelor, 65 or 70 years of age, who must be a member of the Church of Christ church." The frankness is admirable. She recognizes that he might be a Christian and still not belong to the "Church of Christ church," and so she makes her stipulation clear. Nothing wrong with that. But many of our folk would insist that it's enough to say *Christian*, for in being a Christian he would have to belong to the Church of Christ. But this sister was taking no chances. I've always wondered if she found her man, right there in the columns of the *Firm Foundation.*

A more recent article in the same journal, written by Leonard Mullens, longtime preacher in Dallas, writes in a similar vein to that of the widow and the *Newsweek* reporter. Explaining why it has been difficult to get a retirement plan for preachers off the ground, he writes: "We have found that we are really having to make our way over some 'unplowed ground' since each congregation of the church of Christ is independent." To say "each congregation of the church of Christ" is the same as saying "one of the Church of Christ churches." And they are both terribly abusive of the scriptural concept of the church.

It would indeed sound strange for Paul to write to the Corinthians and say: "to the church of God church which is at Corinth" or "to the congregation of the church of God which is at Corinth." Or if Ro. 16:16 read: "the congregations of the churches of Christ salute you." This would sound odd because "church of God" and "churches of Christ" in the scriptures are not names. They are not denominational designations. The church in the scriptures has no name, but is rather described in many different ways.

Church itself means assembly or congregation. To say, therefore, Assembly of God Church, is to say Assembly of God Assembly, which is to denominationalize. To say "congregation of the church of Christ" is to say "congregation of the congregation of Christ." To say, as the apostles did, "the churches of Christ salute you" is to say "the

congregations of Christ salute you." It would therefore be tautological to write "the congregations of the congregation of Christ salute you."

It would be normal to hear "Baptist Church congregations" or "congregations of the Baptist Church," for the Baptist Church is admittedly a denominational appellation. That is *their* name, and for them to say "congregations of the Baptist Church" is a concession that there are other congregations (of Christ) that are not Baptist.

When we say "congregations of the church of Christ" or "church of Christ congregations" we are saying the same thing, even if it is not with the same candor. We are saying that "Church of Christ," or "church of Christ," if you like, is our name. Our Dallas brother would never have said to the *Firm Foundation* or elsewhere: "since each congregation of the church of God is independent," for "Church of God" is not our name. It is already taken!

Paul had occasion to refer to all of the churches of his acquaintance, but notice how he did it: "If anyone is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God" (1 Cor. 11:16). He did not say "nor do the congregations of the churches of God," for that would have been ridiculous. Surely one could say "each Church of Christ" or "every Church of God" and be within scriptural province, for we find the apostles using such language, such as "I teach them everywhere in every church (of Christ)" (1 Cor. 4:17). But he would never have written: "I teach them everywhere in every congregation of the church of Christ," for *congregation* is what "church" means. So 1 Cor. 4:17 could be translated: "I teach them everywhere in every congregation."

We abuse the scriptures with our sectarian names, whether Baptist Church, Methodist Church, Roman Catholic Church, Church of God, Assembly of God, Christian Church, or Church of Christ. It would be awkward to say, "Christian Church church," but it would be consistent since that description of God's community is made into a denominational title. Just because a term is found in scripture does not justify us in making a sectarian name out of it. To use "Church of God" or "Christian Church" or "Church of Christ" in such a way as to imply that only we, only our own crowd, make up the Church of God or the Church of Christ on earth is to play the sectarian game with scriptural language.

In the light of scripture there is no such thing as all these denominations, including our own "Churches of Christ" and "Christian Churches." The church is the Lord's congregation, his body, his family, his community. There is only one such congregation, consisting of all those who are his children and none else. That family may be scattered throughout denominationalism, but they are his, not because they are Baptists or "Church of Christ" or whatever, but because they have been washed in "the bath of regeneration." There ought to be no Baptist Church of Methodist Church or Church of Christ Church, but only the Body of Christ, which, while it bears no particular name, is ever calling upon the Name that is above every name. —*the Editor*

Was Uncle Dave a "Liberal"?

There are some in nonsectarian churches who are sectarians, who violate the laws of God in order to oppose sectarians. They are sectarians in their opposition to sectarians. There are some in sectarian churches who will obey God and follow him in spite of the sectarianism of the churches in which they find themselves. As examples, there are persons in the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches who were baptized to obey God rather than to please the sects. In this they rise above the sectarian spirit, despite the parties in which they find themselves. They ought to get out of the sectarian churches, but they see so much sectarianism in the nonsectarian churches that they think they are all alike. — David Lipscomb, *Questions and Answers,* p. 592.

Was Brother Sewall a "Liberal"?

In teaching the office of baptism and the blessings secured, it does violence to the word of God to select one out of a number of blessings to which baptism brings the person and say this one must have been understood and have led to baptism, while ignoring all others. We find that Christ was baptized to fulfill all righteousness, or to submit to God's whole law for making persons righteous. This was to honor and obey God, the highest and most acceptable motive. —E.G. Sewell, *Question.5 and Answers,* p. 46.

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What Kind of a Book is the Bible? . . .

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

One of the most impressive things I ever read from Alexander Campbell was in reference to making sense of the scriptures, and it is probably in this area that he made his greatest contribution. He urged his readers to forget about any and all commentaries and to turn to the Bible itself, which is its own best interpreter. He called for a continual re-reading of the various books, believing that an intimate acquaintance with the inspired writings would do more than anything else toward understanding. He suggested that one should not be especially concerned with passages he does not readily understand, but to place a check mark by them in passing, and go on with his study. In subsequent readings he can erase the marks as his comprehension grows. Campbell was convinced that even

though one may have many passages checked in the early years of his study, the study of the text itself will eventually bring substantial understanding, apart from commentaries.

1. *The principle of saturation*

So we take our first principle from Campbell, though he does not call it by this name. But we like it: *saturation.* Drink deeply of the word itself. It may not please the Lord for us to turn from the scriptures over the slightest difficulty and turn to some commentary. Let such helps be appealed to more discriminately. Read the text over and over and over. Think about it, talk about it, meditate upon it. Then go over it still again and again. Saturation! As the parched ground takes in the rain, deeper and deeper, so let us absorb the scriptures more and more.

One of the stories I learned at Harvard was that of Prof. Agassiz and the fish, a humbling lesson for a graduate student. The old prof in biology was one of Harvard's great, being one of the few notable scientists in this country to challenge the Darwinian hypothesis when it was published in 1859. The story about the fish is still told on the old campus, and it illustrates our point about saturation.

The prof assigned one of his students a certain specie of fish to study. The young man was diligent in preparing his dissections, with drawings, illustrations, slides, and explanations. At last, his work painstakingly completed (he thought), he turned it over to Prof. Agassiz. The prof smiled approvingly, assuring the student that he had made a good *start*, and that he was now in a position to learn something about the fish. Disheartened that all his labor was but the beginning, the student delved deeper and deeper. But each time he thought he had learned all there was to learn, the prof urged him on in further research. The story goes on and on. The student at last became an authority on that particular specie of fish, thanks to a cranky instructor. That's saturation! And that, by the way, is one of the first lessons one learns in writing a thesis at Harvard. When I turned my first chapters into my major prof, after endless hours of work, he returned them to me with a note that read: "This is no thesis. You have gathered much material. But what do *you* say?" Crestfallen, I thought of that smelly fish story!

Let's face it, we are lazy and superficial in our Bible study. We want everything shelled for us. No sooner do we come upon some troublesome passage than we turn to *Peoples Notes* to see what Uncle B.W. says about it. If we read the passage *in context* again and again every day, applying our minds to it, we might know as much or more than B.W. Johnson or William Barclay knows about it. That was Newton's response when they asked him how he had learned so much about science: *by applying my mind to it.*

2. The principle of discrimination

It is obvious that the scriptures are not all equally significant. Some is much more important than the rest. We are to look for the Bible's central concern, distinguishing it from that which has only local or temporal significance. All truth is equally true, but not

all truth is equally important. The primary message is God's gracious and redemptive activity in saving sinful man through Jesus Christ. Man is called upon to respond to God's grace in faith and obedience throughout the whole of his life and work. To this end the scriptures are replete with specific laws and detailed organization, some applying to God's people in one situation and others to other situations. Through reverent and serious study we are to ascertain what is for us in our situation, distinguishing what is permanently binding from what is applicable only to another time and circumstance. But the *point* of all scripture is Jesus Christ, and it is all to be interpreted in the light of his centrality. He is thus the fulfillment and end of the law as revealed in the Old Covenant scriptures, and it is in him that the Old and New Covenants find their unity.

The Bible is thus a love story, a testimonial to God's philanthropy, and this story makes its way all through the whole of scripture. It is not a law book to be interpreted by legalists, but a story of redemption to be read and responded to by hungry souls. Anyone part of the story is, therefore, to be interpreted in the light of the story as a whole rather than in static, arbitrary fashion.

We are to discriminate between truths in reference to what they tell us about Jesus. *Isaiah* thus becomes more important than *Judges*, and *John* more important than *Jude.* And some things *within* both *Isaiah* and *John* are more vital than the rest, all because they point more dramatically to what Jesus means to us. In the apostolic letters there emerges a pattern of the ideal church, though no one congregation or all of them together constitutes that pattern. But we have to be selective through careful study, recognizing what is crucial for us over against the local and temporal. We may decide that the Lord's Supper is more important than the love feast, though they had both; that prayer is more important than fasting, though both were practiced; that the substance of religion, centered in a broken and contrite heart, is more important than the forms that give expression to that substance, though both fall within God's plan for us.

3. The principle of consistency

By its very nature truth is consistent. It cannot contradict itself. Any new interpretation must therefore be consistent with all the known truths of scripture. This is why we can say the Bible is its own best interpreter. Once we have in hand the obvious truths of God's word, only those conclusions that harmonize with them can be allowed. Thus the known tends to explain the unknown, the simple opens up the more complex.

If, for instance, the universal or catholic nature of the church is established in scripture, then no passage can be interpreted so as to make the church parochial or sectarian. If the Bible makes it clear that justification from sin comes through faith in Christ, apart from works of law, then all other conclusions must conform to that *known.* If the scriptures distinctly teach that one receives the Holy Spirit when he believes and obeys Jesus, then all other interpretations about the Spirit must honor that truth. If the New Covenant scriptures

make it clear that God is a loving and compassionate Father, then this *known* truth must remain pivotal in any composite picture we form of His nature.

This means that some possible interpretations can be held only provisionally or tentatively, and they may never become part of the known. There are those universal truths that we all come to see alike, for they are facts, indisputable facts that need no interpretation. From these pivots of certainty we can reach out into the less certain areas. We only need to realize what we are doing, that we are working from the *known* to the *unknown*, and that the "unknown" may never become absolutely known, not in this world at least. This is especially appropriate to the exciting area of prophecy. It also applies to our tendency to be allegorical in the handling of passages, such as the temptation to make every aspect of a parable stand for something.

Our task is not always so simple as to "take what the Bible says," for in some instances the Bible doesn't really say what it appears to say. 1 Cor. 15:29 clearly refers to "being baptized on behalf of the dead." This cannot be made to mean that one now living can be baptized for a deceased person, for this contradicts the known about baptism. If you can be baptized for another, you can believe for another, repent for another. Baptism must be *our* act of obedience before God, not another's. So 1 Cor. 15:29 cannot teach proxy baptism. We don't have to know what Paul had in mind in order to know that he could not have meant that. True, some of the Corinthians may have had such an idea and practice, and Paul was taking advantage of that in his teaching about the resurrection. But in any case this cannot be given general application and be made to mean that living believers should be baptized in behalf of dead unbelievers.

Nor can the line in 1 Pet. 3:21, "baptism now saves you," be made to mean that there is salvation in the act itself, for the scriptures make it clear that it is by God's mercy that we are saved and not by any work of righteousness which we have done ourselves (Tit. 3:5). This illustrates how we deal with the more obscure passages by way of the clearer ones. So, we come up with some such conclusion as baptism saving us in the sense that it is the means that God has given us for responding to his saving grace.

4. *The principle of induction*

This principle keeps us from imposing upon scripture by making it mean what we want it to mean. Induction is the process of reasoning from particular facts to a general conclusion. It is the method of scientific and historical inquiry. Bruno Hauptmann was found guilty of kidnaping and murdering the Lindbergh baby through an inductive process. The prosecutors came up with certain facts: the ransom money was in his possession; his handwriting matched that of the ransom notes (Including misspelled words); the ladder used in the crime matched the lumber found in his garage; the phone number of the mediator was found in his home, which he explained as a passing interest on his part, saying he copied it from the newspapers, but the number was never made public and was

given only to the kidnapper; Lindbergh identified his voice as the 'voice he heard in the cemetery when he handed over the ransom money.

Facts, facts, facts. The *quality* of them more than the quantity determines the strength of the conclusion. The Hauptmann jury was so convinced by the facts that it was willing to pass the death sentence upon him.

Facts force their own conclusion. If the scriptures do not *compel* us to draw certain conclusions from the facts set forth, then we should draw none. In any event, the conclusion drawn should never be stronger than the evidence for it. We might say, "This is possibly the meaning," when we have evidence that is less than certain.

The controversial passage, "When that which is perfect is come that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Cor. 13:10), is an illustration of how the principle of induction is violated. When one takes the context and lines up the *facts*, he can be certain that such gifts as tongues and prophecy are to cease while love will endure forever. They will cease "when the perfect comes." Here he has to be less certain in that he cannot be sure what *the perfect* is, for it is not explicitly identified. I conclude, along with most scholars, that it refers to the consummation of all time and history, to heaven and end-time. The context strongly suggests this to me. But I have to say this is the *likely* meaning, for I cannot be certain. That "the perfect" refers to the complete revelation of God, and that therefore the gifts ceased when the full canon of scripture was given, I would consider *less likely* or *highly improbable.* But we must exercise caution with all such passages and not claim that a certain conclusion (that we prefer because of tradition) is compelling when it isn't. Some brethren are so sure of themselves on this passage that they use it to withdraw fellowship from those who would dare to differ with them!

Induction therefore is a process that searches for facts, for the known, through which the unknown is invaded. This means we let the scriptures speak to us, not the other way around. We approach with hat in hand, with respect and awe, with our minds open and with no preconceived notions. None of us can do this absolutely, but that is the ideal. This calls for the usual historical-critical approach, as with any literature we are examining. Some of the specifics would be:

1. Determine the reliability of the text. Any serious textual problems? One coming upon Easter in Acts 12:4 might be puzzled until he sees he has a textual problem. What is in the *King James* really isn't in the Bible at all.

2. Consider the literary form of the passage. Is it poetry or prose, allegorical or literal, historical or prophetic?

3. Determine the historical situation. Who said it? To whom? Where? Why? When? What is the cultural, religious, and social context?

4. Consider the crucial terms. What did the words mean to the one who used them and to the ones who *then* read them over against what they might mean to the modern reader?

5. Study the passage in the light of all the known facts. Look at the part in reference to the whole. How does it relate to the scheme of redemption, the story of salvation? How does it fit into that part of the Bible in which it is found? What is its real message? How crucial is it? How does it apply to our modern world and to your personal life?

Complete personal identification with the situations within scripture is impossible. One smitten with cancer may not be able to make specific applications, nor even those who are trying to settle a wage dispute. The Bible may not speak directly to the busing problem, crime in the streets, Watergate, inflation, or international problems. But, led by the Spirit as we believe we are, we do find a certain identification. The Bible may not always *answer* our questions or *solve* our problems, but it does give us the strength to face them. The adaptation of the scriptures to our private lives and to the modern world is thus a crucial problem that each must solve in his own way. Yet we are to believe that in every new situation, whether it be having a baby or starting a business, that the word of God does speak to us.

Finally, it is important to remember that the scriptures are primarily for the church. They are telling God's people how to *really* be His people. Through the church the scriptures speak to the world. And the only Bible many poor lost souls will ever read will be what they see in our lives. We are His epistles, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. How you are read by the world will depend in part on how you read the scriptures. —*the Editor*

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Travel Letter. . .

DRIVING BY SEARCY

Time did not allow that I stop, which I preferred to do, for at Harding College I have both friends and relatives, the latter being both a niece and a nephew among the student body. I was on my way to the Ozarks in northern Arkansas to visit a young physician and his wife, products, by the way, of good old Harding. Once in his home, the doctor told me of how he almost missed getting one of his first jobs, while in medical training, because he was a graduate of Harding. The company had agreed to favor the college by providing some supplies. When they did not arrive on time, one of the Harding officials berated the company's secretary so abrasively as to have her in tears. The owner of the business happened to be listening in, only to discover that disciples of Jesus can be more insensitive to hard-working secretaries than those who make no such profession. It was one of those

"If that's Christianity . . ." So the medical student had to prove himself worthy in spite of his Christian college background.

But that is mild. If one should choose to challenge just how "Christian" *our* colleges are, and whether the "environment" is all that spiritual, he would have ample material. Not only in terms of how they treat faculty and students, sometimes violating academic principles that would cause state universities to wince, but how they also get their hand caught in the federal "cookie jar," by something less than candid practices. One college had to cough up money that it had acquired under false pretenses. The federal handouts of several others would be in jeopardy if HEW were apprised of the "religious test" that they have made in the firing of several professors, some with tenure. Our colleges can be thankful that their dismissed teachers do not return evil for evil! It is their wives that the colleges must better indoctrinate. One prominent professor was invited to return to the sacred confines that he had left for a few years in favor of another school, but his wife issued a mandate that if he did return it would have to be without her, for she had had it. He couldn't stand the Christian college where he was, and she couldn't stand the one where he wanted to go, so they ended up at a state university where the heathen go.

But the character of these colleges is not really my subject. Even if I do know enough on them to get them hanged, at least in Washington, I have to admit to getting that "lump in the throat" when I draw nigh unto Searcy, Abilene or Nashville. One feels that he is on holy ground. That secure feeling. The ideal place to be when Jesus comes. One can feel especially secure at Searcy, for he knows that Harding can always call out the generals. The troops are never; far away from Searcy. And with both Jim Allen and Jim Bales in town, well, as I say, it makes the goose bumps crawl all over me. It must be the safest place in the world both theologically and militarily. It is also like heaven in that there are no "Commies" around.

What made this particular excursion through God's country significant to me is that I was riding with Joe Black, one time minister of the College Church of Christ in Searcy. Joe was schooled at Lipscomb and Harding Graduate School of Religion. He rose quickly in our ranks, enjoying a successful ministry in Wichita. He was called to the Central church while still in the bloom of youth, destined to become one of our most popular ministers. He is probably the most effective preacher ever to serve the Harding community. Though he was not there long, I have heard from people all over the country that were profoundly influenced by his teaching. Some tell me he is the greatest preacher they ever heard, describing him as one who holds old and young alike spellbound by the way he lifts up the glorified Christ. Harding students were especially moved by his lessons, and it was evident that he had a bright future with that church and on that campus.

But he was soon to resign. For some years he worked with a Christian Church, and was then in business in Little Rock. Now he ministers to an independent congregation in Conway, calling itself a Bible church, which is like the Church of Christ in that it immerses and breaks bread each week. He and his wife met me at the airport and bore me northward into Ozark country to the doctor's home, an old friend of his. It struck me as odd that I would be driving through Searcy with this brother who once ministered to the Harding community, listening to his story of how it all happened. It was one of those stories, the like of which I have heard up and down the land, that one could not believe had he not been born and bred in the Church of Christ. We are "a peculiar people," that's for sure.

Not that such stories are rare at Harding. I've heard Robert Meyers tell his, which makes it easy enough to believe that a Harding official would have no problem in browbeating a helpless secretary. Then there is the story of James Atteberry, who still doesn't know why he was fired, after serving the college faithfully for many years. Without "due process" or any kind of hearing where he could hear and respond to charges, he was summarily dismissed. Several alumni, including our doctor friend, tried to find out why their beloved teacher was fired. There were subtle insinuations that there was something about his character, but this just didn't make sense in the cast of the exemplary Jim Atteberry. It turned out that Jim was a *liberal.* They tell it around that when Jim was being questioned by some of the officials, he was asked to explain what kind of college Harding is. "Well, Harding is a liberal arts college that . . ." he drolled out. He was stopped right there. "That's enough," said the trustee, or whoever he was, "Harding is *not* a liberal college!" And that was the end of Jim Atteberry. But he has apparently served well at Pepperdine in the years since.

But Joe Black was not fired. He resigned, and at a time when there was no criticism against him or any pressure for him to do so. He had reservations about what he was supposed to believe as a part of the Harding community, and thought it proper to step down before his doubts became known. He revealed to the elders, one being the highly respected George Benson, that he had these doubts, though he was not saying anything about them, but that he would do so if anyone should ask him.

To hear this tall, dark, and handsome man talk of his secret doubts through the picturesque hills of Arkansas, one might suppose that he was considering a transcendental seance with a guru, or that he was having trouble believing the resurrection or the inspiration of the scriptures, or that he was leaning toward the "God is dead" thing that was then prominent. But, considering where we were, I was suspicious it was not that serious.

Joe is as guileless as a child and too honest to be a climber. His studies led him to believe that the Church of Christ cannot claim to be the only church, that there surely must be Christians elsewhere. He also questioned our position on instrumental music, not that we are not all right in being acappella, but in insisting that it is a sin. That was the extend of the "grave" doubts that threatened his career as a preacher of the gospel.

Once he confided to the elders these doubts, they were uneasy that his views would become known through questions the students were almost sure to ask. In due time they accepted his resignation and Joe Black, with all his potential for good, was lost to the Churches of Christ.

Joe's real sin was in being transparent. He has not learned the worldly virtue of prudence. Many of our teachers and preachers would agree with Joe about our narrow exclusivism and our hangup on instrumental music, but they have learned to be discreet. Not only do they not say what they think, they dare not think what they really think. An honest man may be God's noblest work, as a poet urges, but we have to agree with Plato that honesty (or justice) does not pay. Nice guys probably *do* come in last, and the preacher that levels with his elders, as a son with his father, is likely to be on the outside looking in. It may, of course, be a different story when the Lord passes out the rewards in the last day. I do not understand that our elders will be in charge of *that.* It is just as well.

What a golden opportunity those Searcy elders had to show magnanimity toward a young preacher. They could have recognized his doubts as understandable, doubts that they themselves have surely had if they ever did any thinking at all. They could have pointed out that from the beginning of our Movement our plea has been "Christians only" and not necessarily the only Christians. They could have conceded that instrumental music is not that big a deal anyway, and that he should go on and proclaim Jesus and him crucified and not be bothered by opinionism.

But he had to be sacrificed. Partyism demanded it. It shows how sectism makes men little who would otherwise be magnanimous —and who probably are in those circles outside the party. The party doesn't really care all that much whether Jesus is exalted and the church is edified thereby. Nor is a man's trust in Jesus valued all that much. What really counts is whether the party has sufficient control over him. If he has doubts or if he really believes contrary to the party line, he must suppress his thinking and be something less than an authentic person. If the party has him, then, yes, he can lift up Jesus and teach the word, for sectism always *uses* the truth to its own advantage. But can a man be owned by a party and by Jesus at the same time?

That is the question that our *prudent* majority (or near a majority) must face up to. If all the professors and preachers among us who question our exclusivism would speak up courageously, it would be a great blessing to the Churches of Christ. We would all the

sooner give a more reasonable and a more spiritual witness to the world. The Joe Blacks here and there across the land should haunt our consciences until we too cry out, *I refuse any longer to be sectarian! —the Editor*

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THREE POSSIBLE SURPRISES IN HEAVEN

I am not interested in belaboring the question as to whether the believer really "goes to heaven." Perhaps that is not scriptural terminology after all, but the Bible does refer to the "imperishable wreath" and the "crown of righteousness," and even to "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And Jesus talks about "eternal life in the world to come." If heaven turns out to be on this redeemed earth, and we don't really "go to heaven," that will suit me just fine. Like the apostle, I long for that "eternal weight of glory," and I am willing for the sovereign God of the universe to put it all together as He will, however that may be. Even if we don't "go" to heaven, we have glory beyond comparison awaiting us, and I am wondering if some of us are not in for some surprises.

The first grand surprise for many of our brethren will no doubt be that they made it to heaven. People who are unsure of their salvation are not likely to die with a firm hold on that "anchor that keeps the soul stedfast and sure while the billows roll, fastened to the Rock which cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love." We all know enough to give lip service to the beautiful truth "By grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God," but the carnal man within keeps many of us from fully embracing it. Our self-sufficiency insists that it is too our own doing, partly so at least. And so we try to be good enough, or right enough, or busy enough, or obedient enough that we will perchance make it to heaven.

This is a hard way to live, a way that offers little hope since none of us is good enough, or right enough, or busy enough, or obedient enough. We profess to believe that we can neither buy or earn salvation, but, like Peter, we are hesitant to step out into the depths of complete dependence upon God's grace. Really, the story of Jesus blessing the sinful publican who could cry out, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" rather than the self-sufficient Pharisees, makes no more sense to us than it did the Pharisees. Don't we really believe that it is the "good church member" who prays right, gives right, worships right. and goes to the right church that will go to heaven by God's grace of course! He certainly has a "better chance" than that poor cuss down at the tax office who hardly ever goes to anybody's church, however anguished he may be in his sins.

Let's face it. In the main our people have hardly cultivated that hunger for righteousness that God promises to satisfy. We do not have that poverty of spirit that knows the kingdom of God. We have too long depended on "sound doctrine," which may

be quite different from the *healthful* teaching of Jesus and his apostles, which is what *sound* doctrine ought to mean.

We have consequently nourished a people who do not really know Jesus, who are uncomfortable talking about him. We have made faith doctrinal (loyalty to our own set of interpretations) rather than trust in a Person. This can only lead to frustration, uncertainty, and despair, for no man is good enough or wise enough to put it all together on his own.

Rev. 21:8 says the fearful will have their place in the lake of fire, but this refers to the cowardly rather than those who are uncertain of their destiny. Those who really believe the promises and who can say "We know" with the assurance of the apostle John have more faith in the eternal salvation of the rest of us than we have ourselves. They will not be surprised to see us there, in spite of our own uncertainties. The true believer, the one who really has hope, wants all the church to have that peace and assurance that only Jesus can give. If we truly walk with him now, trusting God's grace, we need not be surprised to find ourselves with him over there.

Now for the second surprise, which grows our of the first. Many of us will be surprised to see those there that we were sure would not be there. Jesus indicated that certain harlots would gain entrance before the self-righteous Pharisees, though there might well be some Pharisees there too. It is not likely to be a "Church of Christ heaven" or a "Southern Baptist Church heaven." I recall one of our gatherings that heatedly debated whether Martin Luther was a Christian. Some of those involved would surely be surprised to see the likes of Luther in heaven, however dependent he was on God's grace manifest in Jesus. I've been reading lately of those old circuit-riding Methodist preachers who blazed the trail for the gospel on our frontiers long before the Revolutionary War, suffering great hardship for Jesus' sake. It is too bad that they all have to miss heaven because their level of understanding and obedience did not reach the sublimity of our own!

Then there will be the sad surprise of the absence of many that we expected to be there, if indeed we are ever sad in heaven. We may learn too late that it takes more than sectarian loyalty to enjoy eternal communion with God and His angels. Even more than good works. A damaging fallacy is to suppose "If she doesn't make it, then nobody will," as if people can really be good enough to go to heaven. The truth is, *if* she makes it, it will be by God's grace, however good she is. And surely that grace will reach out to touch those who are not so good, like me!

Paul gives us the scope of heaven, just as he gives us the scope of fellowship, in his opening words to the Corinthians. They were "the church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." He goes on to say that God calls such ones into the fellowship of his Son. These are the ones who are or will be in heaven —"those sanctified in Christ Jesus" —and we have no way of knowing just who these are.

There may well be many church members who only profess sanctification, who would be uneasy in heaven should they find themselves among the redeemed.

To the number who are saints of God, both before and since Jesus, there must be added those upon whom God bestows His grace because of the Christ, whether children, the infirm, the disadvantaged or whomever. Again we do not know, nor do we need to know, who all may be included here. It is well that we give sufficient room to the grace of God lest we be surprised overmuch. We do not want to be going around saying, "What are you doing here?" That may make it appear that we have no business being there! —*the Editor*

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OFFICE NOTES

Inexpensive Paperbacks

Marriage is for Love, Richard Strauss, is ideal to hand to young or old as it can strengthen the fabric of the marriage relationship. 1.95.

The Church at the End of the 20th Century, Francis Schaeffer, discusses the threat that the church faces from modern culture. 1.95.

God Goes to High School, James C. Hefley, is the incredible story of Youth for Christ. It is a lesson in what can happen with small beginnings. 1.25.

The Taste of New Wine, Keith Miller, is now available at only 1.25.

The Yoke of Christ at 2.95 and *Confronting Christ* at 1.25 are both by Elton Trueblood. His "Abolition of the Laity" in the first is super.

The Fool of God, Louis Cochran's story of A. Campbell, is now available for only 3.50. John Stott's *Christ the Controversalist* at 2.50 is the best buy of all, and a must.

Next Month . . .

Carl Ketcherside begins his life story, *A Pilgrimage of Joy.*

The editor begins a series on *Bicentennial Notes on Restoration History.*

Also: *"Thy Kingdom Come," "Living in Adultery": Second Time Around, "Let's Remove the Controls - NOW!"*

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READERS' EXCHANGE

Your “Living in Adultery” was interesting, not only to me but to my Dad who was here on vacation. We both read it three times and discussed it at length. You certainly have raised some questions, and I suspect you’ll hear from a great many of your readers. Continue to challenge the old, worn-out positions for only then are we made to think. —*Buff Scott, Cherokee, Iowa*

May the Lord bless you as you continue to endeavor to pull our divided “restoration brotherhood” together again. I trust that all of us will see the folly of our past divisions and the great price we have paid for our sinfulness. Your efforts are appreciated and we pray that God will give you many years to sound the plea. —*Isaac J. Flora, Xenia, Ohio*

Our students come from all denominations, range in age from 25-63 and include this year the vice-chief of chaplains of the ROK Air Force. We are especially proud that we have had three men from the Church of Christ to receive degrees and have six more presently in class. —*Bert Ellis, Berean Christian Center, Box* 141, *Pusan, Korea*

We’ve had some interesting visitors lately. Randall Trainer really inspired us with his report on how the church is progressing in Wakefield, Mass. It numbers about 250 and is comprised principally of former Roman Catholics and various shades of worldly people. Five former prostitutes have been baptized along with numerous individuals who were on drugs. The one responsible for this evangelism and much of the growth is a former alcoholic. —*Stan Daulton, Abilene, Texas*

This summer I worshipped at Quaker Street in Lubbock, a non-class group that is truly open. I spent a week with the Glenwood Springs, Co. people, a free and loving group. One of their most spiritual men, Dr. Jim Hauptli, an elder who came from the Christian Church, was quite a reader of yours until cancer made it impossible for him to read. He died recently as a great witness to the goodness of God in his illness as he had been in his life. *Margaret Williams, Houston, Texas*

I know of a congregation near by which just recently called a meeting out of desperation and voted whether to stay Church of Christ or go Pentecostal. I understand that the former won out, but to the Devil goes the victory. Oh to God, if we could just stay with the essence of Christianity and keep our opinions as private matters in our relation with brethren. —*William F. Jones, Fairborn, Ohio*

Albert Weeks of Eugene, Oregon sent along his favorite poem of Emily Dickinson, believing it speaks to all those in search for truth, beauty, and freedom.

I died for Beauty, but was scarce
Adjusted in the tomb,
When one who died for Truth was lain
In an adjoining room.
He questioned softly why I failed?
"For Beauty" I replied
"And I for Truth - the two are one;
"We brethren are" he said.
And so, as kinsmen met a night,
We talked between the rooms,
Until the moss had reached our lips,
And covered up our names.

Ted Cline, Church of Christ, 3849 W. Encanto Blvd., Phoenix 85009, has put a lot of work in on a study of *Questions for Jehovah's Witnesses,* which has had an impressive sale thus far. You can get his second edition for only 1.00, 12 for 6.00.

Here in Sullivan (pop. 7,000) we have three congregations, all with the Church of Christ name. We are trying to make headway in unity, mainly because of John 17:21. — *Audry Smith, 221 E. Jackson, Sullivan, In. 47882.*

I receive your publication several months late since it comes by surface mail. I enjoy your insights and straightforward thinking. Your paper helps me to question many things that I have too much taken for granted. —*F. Allison, Box* 194, *Sotik, Kenya.*

I'll be 88 years old Nov. 29. I can't read as I once did, so it takes me a long time to read the *Review.* I will have to admit to getting old. I am trying to find a larger magnifying glass, for the one I have is only three inches around. Where I go it goes. I go to the Lake Merced Church of Christ each Lord's day. Am thankful that someone comes and gets me and brings me back.

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